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SUBJECT: BURMESE PRIME MINISTER VISITS JAKARTA

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein met with President Yudhoyono, VP Kalla and key ministers during a March 16-17 visit to Jakarta. Yudhoyono stressed the need for concrete progress toward political reform and for credible elections in 2010. Sein acknowledged concerns regarding the Rohingya refugee situation (Indonesia is taking care of roughly 400 of them in the Aceh region) and the need to resolve the issue. A key presidential assistant told the DCM that Yudhoyono had raised the Burma points that President Obama had conveyed to Yudhoyono in their telephone conversation on March 13. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Burmese PM has just wrapped up a visit to Jakarta. High-level meetings between Burmese and Indonesian officials are quite rare. Sein's visit was his first to Indonesia since his appointment as prime minister in October ¶2007. The visit was postponed on several occasions, including by the death of former president Suharto in January ¶2008. Sein and Yudhoyono had previously met on the margins of ASEAN Summits. Burmese strongman Than Shwe visited Jakarta in 2005 for the Asia-Africa Summit.

¶3. (SBU) Sein met with President Yudhoyono and paid a courtesy call on Vice President Kalla. The meeting with Yudhoyono consisted of a substantive one-on-one exchange on sensitive political topics, including the Burmese political situation. This discussion was followed by a meeting with ministers, including FM Wirajuda and Trade Minister Pangestu on the Rohingya refugees, disaster relief cooperation, bilateral cooperation and trade and investment.

¶4. (U) In public remarks, Presidential Adviser Dino Djalal related that the Yudhoyono meeting covered transnational crime, counter-terrorism and military cooperation, trade and investment and the global financial crisis. Yudhoyono expressed appreciation for his ongoing correspondence with Than Shwe. Yudhoyono underscored the need for a practical solution to the Rohingya refugee issue. As discussed on the margins of the ASEAN Summit in Hua Hin in late February, Djalal noted, the solution must involve the countries of origin.

¶5. (U) According to Djalal, the Burmese PM said the GOB was ready to take back the refugees. Sein acknowledged the region's concern regarding the Rohingyas and the need for a solution. Djalal said Sein reviewed the Burmese regime's seven-step "roadmap to democracy," which would lead to elections in 2010 and a new legislature and government. Yudhoyono stressed that ASEAN and the international community needed to see real progress, and that the reform process had to be "credible, transparent, fair and inclusive." Holding an election was not enough: the quality of the election and process was key.

¶6. (U) On economic issues, Djalal said that Yudhoyono discussed his plans to participate in the London G-20 Summit as a representative of developing countries.

¶7. (C) Djalal told the DCM that Yudhoyono had raised the Burma points that President Obama had conveyed to Yudhoyono in their telephone conversation on March 13.

¶8. (C) Contacts on the Burma Desk of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) told poloff on March 18 that the discussion of political reform had occurred strictly between Yudhoyono and Sein. Yudhoyono had also pressed Burma to support the ASEAN focus group, the efforts of UN Special Envoy Gambari and a potential visit by SYG Ban Ki Moon. DEPLU contacts said that Sein had specifically asked to hear Indonesia's experience in moving toward democracy. In that discussion, Yudhoyono had stressed the need to balance development in the political, economic and social sectors, the benefits of sharing power and the utility of regional autonomy arrangements such as Aceh and Papua.

¶9. (C) DEPLU contacts said the Rohingyas discussion had also included a discussion on the Bali Process. (Note: The Bali Process involves Asian countries and Australia and is focused on migration.) On disaster relief, they said a Burmese official delegation would visit Aceh in early May to learn from Indonesia's experience following the 2004 tsunami. The delegation would meet with Indonesian counterpart agencies and with ASEAN and UN officials. The GOI also had pressed for Burma to host in 2009 the second meeting of the Indonesian-Burmese Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation, co-chaired by foreign ministers. Indonesia had convened the first meeting in November 2007; Burma had failed to hold the second meeting in 2008.

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